

7th July, 1959.

COCOM Document No. 3592 B

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

ON

THE EXPORT OF CABLES TO THE U.S.S.R.

29th June, 1959

Present: Belgium(Luxembourg), Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

References: COCOM Docs. 3436 and Addendum, 3444, 3450, 3451, 3452, 3464, 3470, 3472, 3473, 3474, 3475, 3483, 3487, 3415.26/1, 2 and 3, 3489, 3492, 3500, 3517, 3582.

1. The GERMAN Delegate said he had been instructed to state that the German authorities had examined the statement made by the Belgian Delegation on June 23rd 1959 (as recorded in COCOM Doc. 3582). In their opinion the fact that an export licence had been granted by one country for an embargoed item on the basis of a different interpretation did not seem by itself to justify other member countries overriding an embargo agreement. The German position remained that the Federal Republic would not grant a licence for railway signalling cables without prior consultation in the Committee. This position would however be very difficult to maintain if - following the French action - another member country did not conform to the Coordinating Committee's rules as far as this item was concerned. The German authorities would therefore be grateful to the Belgian authorities if they would reconsider their position and would adopt the position taken by the German, and, they believed, other authorities.

2. The UNITED STATES Delegate said that his authorities too had weighed very carefully the statement made by the Belgian Delegate on June 22nd. They had recalled not only that the cable in question was clearly covered by a literal reading of Item 1526, but also the agreed and uncontested technical judgement that the cable under study was capable of (and, in the view of United States technicians, specially designed for) long distance communications affording high security. The United States authorities considered that no communications cable should have been, or should be in the future, licensed for export to the Sino-Soviet Bloc without recourse to the Coordinating Committee's prior consultation exceptions procedures. The United States Government trusted that the Belgian authorities would not wish to license communications cable to the Sino-Soviet Bloc, and that at the minimum the Belgian authorities would make clear their intention to consult the Committee under the normal exceptions procedures should they wish to consider authorising the export of any communications cable to the Sino-Soviet Bloc. The Delegate added that his Government had recently been informed by their Embassy in Moscow that early in June a senior Soviet propaganda lecturer, speaking to a large number of military and civilian propaganda agitators who attended such lectures to provide themselves with the latest material for propagandistic activities, had hailed the recent export authorisation of communications cable as one among a number of indications of alleged Free World dissensions which both weakened the Free World in immediate dealings with the Soviets and in the long run, helped to assure the ultimate world victory of Communism. It had been clear from this propaganda lecture that the Soviets were well aware that this cable was embargoed communications cable, not simply railway signalling equipment. This use for propaganda purposes of the export authorisation recently considered in this Committee indicated one of the values the Soviets attached to breaking through Coordinating Committee embargoes. Undoubtedly, the Soviets would also exploit a similar action by a second member country. Perhaps they would find a second such action even more useful than the first for propaganda exploitation. The United States authorities felt sure that no member countries wished to provide the Soviets with material that could be used to create an impression of disunity which was so much at variance with the facts of the Committee's mutual purpose and their common actions themselves.

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3. The BELGIAN Delegate stated that the action taken by the French Government constituted a dangerous precedent, for it proved that it had been possible for a difference of interpretation to lead to a breakdown of the Committee's rule as to equality of treatment. The Belgian authorities were not able at the present time to give an undertaking that, if requested, they would not issue any licence to export material such as that whose despatch to the Soviet Bloc had been authorised by the French Government. In reply to the United States Delegate's statement, the Delegate said that he had been instructed to maintain the position he had outlined at the last meeting: the Belgian Government wished to be free in such an event to decide whether they would consult the Committee or would confine themselves to informing the Committee after the licence had been issued.
4. In reply to the Belgian Delegate, the FRENCH Delegate reminded the Committee that he had explained to them in detail the course which his authorities had followed before authorising the export of 450 kms. of cable to the Soviet Union. That course did not make it possible to consider the French export as a precedent. He invited the Committee to refer especially to the statement recorded in paragraph 3 of COCOM 3517.
5. The ITALIAN Delegate pointed out that the German Delegation had stated that their authorities would not grant a licence for the export of railway signalling cables without prior consultation in the Committee (paragraph 1 above). He asked whether the Belgian Government were also envisaging prior consultation of the Committee or, in the hypothesis of a simple notification, whether this would be prior or a posteriori notification. He emphasised that this was a point to which his Government attached some importance.
6. The BELGIAN Delegate stated that his authorities would notify the Committee as soon as a decision had been taken on the principle of granting a licence.
7. The GERMAN Delegate asked if by this last statement the Belgian Delegate meant that the Committee would be notified immediately a decision had been taken on the principle of authorising the export but before the licence had been granted, or only after the licence had been granted.
8. The BELGIAN Delegate stated that, should the case arise, the Committee would be notified after the export licence had been issued.
9. The GERMAN Delegate took note of his Belgian colleague's statement and reserved the right to submit further comments later if his authorities considered it necessary.
10. The UNITED STATES Delegate remarked that from the statement made by the Belgian Delegate at the previous meeting (COCOM 3582) he had understood that the Belgian authorities reserved the right to decide at the time when the issue should arise, whether or not they would consult the Committee. The Delegate said he would be grateful if the Belgian Delegate would be good enough to clarify this important point.
11. The BELGIAN Delegate stated that as his Government's object was to restore the equality of treatment which had been threatened by the French decision, they desired to safeguard their complete liberty of action; nevertheless, it was possible that within the ensuing three months the situation would develop in such a manner that the Belgian Government would decide to refuse the licence.